Abstract

This thesis is an attempt to look into the problem of "dichotomous perspective" that Sinologists face in the research of Chinese tradition. It attempts to see "dichotomous perspective" both as a problem and a valuable window to look into the change and continuity in Chinese tradition.

I propose the concept of "pro-patriarchy" and "pro-seniority" to differentiate two views, the former having being originated from the elite and the latter, from the mass. Taking the example of mourning grades, this thesis will explain the difference that historians and anthropologists see in Chinese tradition. With the theoretical framework of Great and Little Traditions, the thesis will unravel that some components of Great Tradition that are recorded in the Codes since Ming dynasty, are actually products of Little Tradition. With Ming dynasty official-scholar, Xie Zhao Zhe, as the other point of reference, this thesis will then explain that the theory of Great and Little Traditions actually results in "dichotomous perspective", as the respective elite and mass were intermingled in Chinese society. Finally, it will be suggested that, instead of becoming a problem, "dichotomous perspective" provides us with questions which can eventually help us discover the true "Chineseness" in Chinese tradition.
The first chapter of this thesis elaborates on the problem of “dichotomous perspective”. Making use of historical sources, the second and third chapters explore the change in the law regarding mourning grades, as seen in the Codes, and the general response of the gentry towards the change in The Ming Code. Making use of anthropological information, the fourth chapter explains why the “pro-seniority” view can be seen as having been originated from the mass. The subsequent three chapters will then explain how the Great and Little Tradition was made to intermingle, as seen in the example of Xie Zhao Zhe. The last chapter will conclude the thesis.